

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EURE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00 INRE-00

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FM AMEMBASSY ATHENS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9053

INFO AMCONSLU THESSALONIKI UNN

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EO 11652: NA

TAGS/ PGOV GR

SUBJECT: NEW CONSTITUTION APPROVED BY PARLIAMENT JUN 7

REF: ATHENS 4164

1. GREEK PARLIAMENT APPROVED ON JUN 7 BY REQUIRED 2/3 MAJORITY NEW CONSTITUTION WITH 120 ARTICLES. NEW CONSTITUTION WAS FORMALLY SIGNED BY PRESIDENT OF REPUBLIC, PRESIDENT OF PARLIAMENT, AND PRIME MINISTER AND COUNCIL OF MINISTERS ON THE MORNING OF JUN 9. WITH PUBLICATION IN OFFICIAL GAZETTE ON JUN 11 CONSTITUTION GOES INTO FORCE.

2. OPPOSITION PARTIES MAINTAINED THEIR BOYCOTT AND 84 OPPOSITION DEPUTIES WERE NOT PRESENT FOR VOTE. ALL 208 NEW DEMOCRACY DEPUTIES PRESENT VOTED IN FAVOR (OF 8 ABSENT ND DEPUTIES, 7 SENT TELEGRAMS INDICATING THEY WOULD HAVE VOTED AFFIRMATIVELY IF PRESENT, AND PRESUMABLY SO WOULD THE EIGHTH WHO OUT OF THE COUNTRY).

3. IN A SPEECH PRIOR TO THE VOTING PRIME MINISTER CARAMANLIS CHARGED OPPOSITION DEPUTIES WITH ANTI DEMOCRATIC ACTION IN BOYCOTTING THE VOTING BUT ENDED ON CONCILIATORY NOTE WITH THE HOPE THAT ALL GREEKS, INCLUDING OPPOSITION DEPUTIES, WILL HELP TO GENERATE PROPER CONDITIONS FOR DEMOCRACY TO FUNCTION.

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PM CARAMANLIS DESCRIBED THE CONSTITUTION AS A BALANCE BETWEEN

FRENCH AND GERMAN MODELS AND ADDED THAT CONTROVERSY OVER POWERS OF THE PRESIDENT WAS UNREALISTIC SINCE UNDER THE NEW CONSTITUTION GREEK PRESIDENT WILL HAVE LESS AUTHORITY THAN PRESIDENTS OF US, FRANCE, FINLAND OR OTHER COUNTRIES. CARAMANLIS SAID THAT THE PROSPECTS FOR THE FUTURE OF GREECE WERE NEVER BETTER. HE CONCLUDED THAT DESPITE THE OPPOSITION'S CRITICISMS, THE CONSTITUTION WAS DEMOCRATIC, LIBERAL AND PROGRESSIVE.

4. IN A STATEMENT TO THE PRESS OPPOSITION LEADER GEORGE MAVROS EXPRESSED REGRET BECAUSE THE PM'S REMARKS INDICATED AN ANTI PARLIAMENTARY MENTALITY. HE DEFENDED THE OPPOSITIONS ROLE IN THE CONSTITUTIONAL DEBATE AND ANNOUNCED THAT THE CU/NF INTENDS TO LAUNCH A CAMPAIGN TO AMEND THE CONSTITUTION. IN RESPONSE TO A QUESTION MAVROS INDICATED, HOWEVER, THAT THE OPPOSITIONS ABSTENTION DID NOT SUGGEST THAT THE OPPOSITION DEPUTIES DO NOT RECOGNIZE THE VALIDITY OF THE NEW CONSTITUTION. ANDREAS PAPANDREOU WILL GIVE PASOK'S VIEWS ON THE NEW CONSTITUTION AT A PRESS CONFERENCE LATER TODAY BUT HE HAS ALSO ALREADY INDICATED THAT PASOK WILL START STRUGGLE AIMED AT AMENDING THE CONSTITUTION.
KUBISCH

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